

105TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. RES. 253

Expressing the sense of the Senate that the United States Department of Agriculture provide timely assistance to Texas farmers and livestock producers who are experiencing worsening drought conditions.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 23, 1998

Mr. GRAMM (for himself and Mrs. HUTCHISON) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry

RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the Senate that the United States Department of Agriculture provide timely assistance to Texas farmers and livestock producers who are experiencing worsening drought conditions.

Whereas the statewide economic impact of the drought on Texas agriculture could be more than \$1.7 billion in losses, according to the Texas Agricultural Extension Service;

Whereas the direct loss of income to agricultural producers is \$517 million, which will lead to a loss of another \$1.2 billion in economic activity for the state;

Whereas the National Weather Service has reported that all 10 climatic regions in the State of Texas have received

below average rainfall from March through May, a critical time in the production of corn, cotton, sorghum, wheat, and forage;

Whereas the total losses for Texas cotton producers have already reached an estimated \$157 million;

Whereas nearly half of the State of Texas' rangeland as of May 31, 1998, was rated as "poor" or "very poor" as a result of the lack of rain;

Whereas the value of lost hay production in the State of Texas will approach an estimated \$175 million statewide, leading to an economic impact of \$582 million;

Whereas dryland fruit and vegetable production losses in East Texas have already been estimated at \$33 million;

Whereas the early rains in many parts of Texas produced a large quantity of forage that is now extremely dry and a dangerous source of fuel for wildfires; and

Whereas the Texas Forest Service has indicated that over half the State is in extreme or high danger of wildfires due to the drought conditions: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That it is the sense of the Senate of the
 2 United States that the Secretary of Agriculture streamline
 3 the drought declaration process to provide necessary relief
 4 as quickly as possible; that the Secretary of Agriculture
 5 ensure that local Farm Service Agency offices are
 6 equipped with full time and emergency personnel in
 7 drought-stricken areas to assist producers with disaster
 8 loan application packages; that the Secretary of Agri-
 9 culture instruct the United States Forest Service to assist

1 the State of Texas and the Federal Emergency Manage-
2 ment Agency in prepositioning fire fighting equipment and
3 other appropriate resources in affected Texas counties;
4 that the Secretary of Agriculture authorize haying and
5 grazing on Conservation Reserve Program acreage; that
6 the Secretary of Agriculture convene experts within the
7 Department to develop and implement an emergency plan
8 to help prevent wildfires and to overcome the economic
9 impact of the continuing drought so the Department of
10 Agriculture can provide assistance in a rapid and efficient
11 manner for producers who are suffering from drought con-
12 ditions.

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